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ABSTRACT

Stages in the development of international and intercultural education in the American secondary schools are discussed in this report. The author describes different sets of rationale for teaching toward international understanding which have evolved through the years. Cited are six social studies projects which represent productive materials and programs being developed for the secondary schools. Suggestions of methods intended to improve international understanding in American schools are presented. These include proposals for use of educational resources from other countries which might assist the schools in this country to realize their objectives related to international understanding. (SHM)

TOWARD INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING IN THE AMERICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A Report to the Hawaii Conference of the Joint Committee on United States-Japan Educational and Cultural Cooperation
Hilo, Hawaii, June 16, 1973

by

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The American School System

Before considering the participation of the secondary schools in a program designed to improve international understanding, it would seem appropriate to identify three pertinent variables characterizing the American educational system: First, it should be noted that the secondary school system in the United States is an extensive, diverse, and somewhat impenetrable institution attending to nearly twenty million students in the public and two million in the private schools. It is estimated that these students are enrolled in approximately twenty-seven thousand public and private secondary schools employing nearly a million teachers. A second point to be noted is that the government of the United States has virtually no legal or informal control over the curricular policies of the schools or over the curricular affairs of teachers and students. Although approximately one half of the separate state governments do exert a significant prescriptive control over curricular decisions affecting the selection of subject areas students are required to pursue, these states tend to exert slight influence over the manner in which courses are organized and taught. The true locus of educational power, influence, and implementation fundamentally resides in the more than sixteen thousand separate school districts. Even these districts, more often than not, relinquish to their schools and teachers the significant decisions about what is to be taught, what educational materials are to be utilized, and what teaching strategies are to be employed. A third relevant factor to note is that American teachers generally have not been particularly well informed about international events, issues, or concerns. In a study of 180 experienced secondary social studies teachers by McKeown,[1] only 14 were found to be able to recall correctly the four countries in which Baghdad, Karachi, Kabul, and Bangkok are located. Only 26 were able to recall the name of the Prime Minister of Japan. Taylor,[2] in another study determined that less than ten percent of the college graduates entering the teaching profession had ever been enrolled in a course in non-Western or international studies.

Thus, those wishing to assist American students to increase their international understanding must first comprehend the seemingly overwhelming task of effectively communicating to nearly ten percent of the American public through instructors generally unaware and untrained in the field of international studies who teach within an educational milieu lacking centralized leadership and effective local direction.

The Classroom Performance

The form of international and intercultural education in the American secondary schools has in the last half-century evolved through several stages. Between the two world wars, what limited attempt there was to achieve international understanding in the schools was generally based upon helping students to become aware of the diplomatic, economic, and military relations among European nations. Often the approach was to

teach what was "newsworthy" without seriously attempting to generate an organized body of concepts and principles. More often than not, students were required to learn the names, dates, and events associated with wars, governments, and political events through a chronologically arranged history textbook which focused almost exclusively on Europe. In fact, one influential textbook in listing the fifty most important dates in world history, cited only one date that referred to Asia. This date was when Japan was "opened up" by Commodore Perry.[3]

Between World War II and 1960 changes primarily in the geography and world history courses revealed the establishment of a tenuous and fragile link to world cultures and societies. Secondary students began to study political processes related to national states and their leaders in countries other than Europe as a means of comprehending the struggle for national interests and power. Countries were increasingly being studied for the living patterns of their people rather than for their identification with products and wars. Asia, Africa, and Latin America were seriously but briefly considered as a result of a few "World Regions" textbooks that advocated a study of "contrasting cultures." Japan, which by this time was studied in many elementary schools from a cultural point of view in conjunction with other countries such as Switzerland and Peru, was examined in the high school as a subject for political and economic study along with countries such as England, Germany, and Russia. The educational stress, however, remained solidly in the memorization of factual information concerning European life. In fact, it was quite possible for a high school graduate to conceive that world civilization began in an area like Mesopotamia, became dormant, then revived because of the Israelites and Greeks, moved through Rome to the Christians, finally blossoming in Northern Europe where it was exported to America.

During the decade following 1960, conditions conducive to international understanding improved appreciably. World history and geography courses moved significantly toward a global orientation and courses such as "World Studies" or "World Cultures" became required courses throughout several states such as New York and Pennsylvania. Various elective courses entitled "International Relations" or "International Politics" were developed. These courses generally were political in nature and focused on topics such as nationalism, diplomacy, balance of power, ideology, and the United Nations. There were several innovative thrusts as world cultural and societal studies were being offered in significant numbers. In a study of "innovative teachers'" programs in international studies, Becker and East[4] reported that 65% of the programs were political in focus. The same study also revealed that the majority of "innovative teachers" relied on nontext materials rather than on textbooks. For the average teacher, however, the textbook remained the keystone for his course. The text lost much of its sacrosanct character as inexpensive paperback books, simulations and games, motion picture films, and especially prepared school pamphlet materials appeared in limited quantities to lighten the load for the internationally oriented teacher.

For a select group of social studies teachers, the 1960's period was an innovative, exciting, and productive period. The concept of inquiry-oriented instruction was encouraged by academicians and school administrators alike.

Many teachers were required to develop courses allowing students to encounter documents, articles, issues, and problems conducive to the learning of "inquiry techniques," "thinking skills," or "value conflict resolution procedures." The new pedagogy accepted by a modest but increasing number of teachers no longer required students to memorize the chronologially organized names, dates, places, and details, but rather encouraged social science perspectives, aesthetic insights, simulated decision making, moral valuing, and the development of generalizations requiring a synthesizing of information from an international data source. Teachers and students in increasing numbers began to be introduced to the world as a single system of interdependent parts. The educational programs in this limited number of classrooms were designed to assist students to gain insights into such concerns as the innate characteristics of man, the concepts of conflict, culture, and progress, the relation of man to man, and the purpose of government.

The innovative practices of the 1960's assisted in cracking the traditionally rigid pedagogical walls, but they failed to initiate a substantial change in the pedagogical approach to international understanding. In support of this conclusion, a recent survey by the Educational Testing Service[5] revealed that, in general, social studies courses demonstrated striking resemblances to those of 25 years ago. In a study by Lambert and Klineberg[6] it was reported that the mass media is the students' almost exclusive source of information about foreign peoples. Taylor[7] in another study found that only 2% of the time high school students spend in school is devoted to non-Western or international studies.

The Professional Climate

Even in recent times, the American secondary teacher has generated several distinguishably different sets of rationale for teaching toward international understanding.

Three decades ago the rationale for international understanding was fundamentally ethnocentric, nationalistic, and pragmatic. It was felt that national security and power would be enhanced if the American citizen knew about world events, problems, and policies associated with political, economic, and social patterns. The world was viewed as a collection of interdependent countries. If Americans failed to understand internal responses and the interactions of the major components, it was presumed that the United States would become less successful in such areas as national security and commerce.

During the 1950's and the 1960's, teachers tended to justify teaching toward international understanding on the basis of providing for world peace and human understanding. Teachers felt responsible to teach students to recognize their cultural biases, to develop empathy (which in some cases was tantamount to sympathy), and to be tolerant of the values of others. A direct attack on ethnocentric attitudes and beliefs was deemed appropriate for in the spirit of Franz Boaz's cultural relativism, a culture could be assessed only in relation to its own values. Countries such as

Japan were viewed as neighbors, not only in terms of improved transportation but in terms of economic interest, technological direction, patterns of urbanization, and as partners facing the risk of possible world destruction.

Recently another climate change has occurred. Teachers in rapidly growing numbers are beginning to advocate international and cultural studies as a means of enabling students to acquire the insights necessary for discovering ways in which they will be able to grapple and cope with the problems of self-fulfillment. The peoples of the world more and more are being viewed as a resource for learning how human beings have organized their lives in order to answer the agonizing, perennial questions related to human behavior and personal fulfillment. Many teachers are beginning to feel that as literary items are studied for their insights into the human response so, too, should the data of other societies. Teachers are beginning to believe that exposure to the personal values and responses found in other cultures and societies is the most effective way to assist students to comprehend the human condition and thereby better prepare themselves for choosing from among the alternatives in life. The consequence of this view is that teachers now want students to study the world's people as much as possible from the "inside." The Asian Studies Curriculum Project staff found that what teachers wanted to study about Tokyo was "how the people of Tokyo felt." They wanted their students to know what a pressured high school student, a woman newly arrived from a farming town working on an assembly line, and an upwardly mobile young executive think about and feel. Teachers are advocating the classroom presentation of societal achievements and tragedies, the daily personal successes and failures, and the beauty and ugliness of the world's countries. They wish to select from among the phenomena that make up the panorama of human experience, those bits and pieces which appear to have the greatest potential to expand, develop, and mature the affective world of the learner.

Increasingly, teachers are making statements to the effect that it is more important for a student to know himself than to know about world affairs. This, however, does not imply that a form of egoistic life enjoyment has replaced the need for intercultural and international responsibility and concern in the minds of secondary teachers. Teachers are quite aware that more of the earth's metals have been used in the last fifty years than in all of history and that crop failures in India or Russia affect Kansas farmers, the New York Stock Exchange, and food prices in France. They realize that there is a worldwide system of human interaction, a growing globalization of military and economic interdependence, a transnational network of organizations, groups and social institutions, and an ever-expanding homogeneity of culture. They are also aware that many countries share the same rate of change and that mankind may now have a veto power over his very existence. While phrases such as "spaceship earth," and "global village" may have become clichés, teachers are quite aware that all students should be helped to develop international understanding and responsibility. American teachers are also aware that they live in a pluralistic society within the United States and that, perhaps, one of the primary teaching responsibilities is to assist students to learn to live a rewarding life within this pluralistic society. They are beginning to believe that an integrated study of international and domestic cultural pluralism might have reciprocal benefits in preparing

students to cope with the continuing change, complexity, and ambiguity to be encountered throughout their lives.

Innovative Directions

It is evident that there exists a pedagogical gap between the actual classroom instruction and teachers' objectives and aspirations in the field of international education. This gap or lag between performance and disposition is very likely rooted in the teachers' conceptual and attitudinal shifts which have not been accompanied with adequate help or support for teachers in the form of international education programs, teaching ideas, and student materials. While this educational dissonance is reason for lament, it may provoke the increased receptivity and motivation necessary for future classroom innovation.

Several recently developed and implemented secondary school programs have demonstrated promise for the nurturing of international understanding.[8] The Asian Studies Inquiry Program includes fifteen booklets composed of primary source documents and interpretive articles clustered around three themes: "Traditional Patterns of Asian Life," "Changing Patterns of Asian Life," and "Asian Thought." The program presents three overarching questions to be answered: "What have been the traditional patterns of Asian life?" "How do Asians view their world?" and "What is changing the patterns of life in Asia?" The various booklets which carry titles such as "Chinese Painting," "Buddhism," and "Modernization in Japan" are intended to provide information which will encourage students to synthesize answers to both the major and subordinate questions and to raise their own questions. The Harvard University Social Studies Project, which primarily focuses on the teaching of value conflict resolution skills, presents public issues identified with several countries such as China, Kenya, and Russia for classroom consideration. The program entitled World History Through Inquiry presents students with informative booklets organized according to academic disciplines such as economics or history. Information drawn from a great many societies, often in the form of primary source documents, is organized in a manner that allows students to create their own generalizations. The World Studies Curriculum Project designed for high school students with reading difficulties, includes four books: Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This program enables students to observe the human response by reading about the personal experiences of people from four regions of the world. These materials are designed so that students may be able to discover insights and elements of their own pluralistic society through studying about world pluralism. The Geography in an Urban Age Project is an extremely effective multi-media program requiring students to develop cultural insights by coping with problems such as planning a city. International data are often used by students in performing such tasks. The Anthropology Curriculum Study Project developed some collections of readings, simulated artifacts and other multi-media materials. The four collections or kits are entitled "Studying Societies," "Origins of Humanness," "The Emergence of Complex Societies," and "Modernization and Traditional Societies." The Boston Children's Museum Project

designed several imaginative collections of simulated artifacts utilizing objects representing an integration of anthropological, sociological, geographical, and historical perspectives with artistic, musical, religious, literary and other cultural elements. Fundamentally, the program is a non-print learning system stressing activities such as student role-playing. Characteristic topics are "A House in Ancient Greece," and "The Japanese Family."

The six above-described social studies projects represent a new wave of productive materials and programs being developed for the secondary schools. However, aside from these items and a few somewhat improved textbooks considering world history or world studies, there are few exciting or effective materials for the classroom teacher to use. Of the eighteen secondary social studies projects judged "most important to the field" by the National Council for the Social Studies in 1972,[9] only three were significantly concerned with topics involving world regions other than North America. In fact, at this moment there are no serious educational material development projects either producing or planning to produce school materials primarily concerned with international education or with individual countries such as England or Japan. What materials and resources do exist tend to introduce secondary students to the history and culture of a specific country in a tangential rather than in a direct manner.

If a junior high or high school teacher wanted to have his students study the Japanese society, he simply would not be able to find a suitable multi-media program, a series of directly pertinent pamphlets, or even a reasonably comprehensive and effective book. If he were industrious, imaginative, well-informed, and perhaps well-financed, he might be able to collect bits and pieces from a dozen or more programs and publications and create a reasonably effective Japanese segment for his course.

The Proposals for Improvement

Considering the realities of the American secondary school, the attitudes and competencies of teachers, and the availability of classroom supplies, a few suggestions and caveats intended to improve international understanding are offered for consideration.

I. As the American secondary school community is becoming more committed to programs that have specific behavioral objectives, the advocates of international education programs would find it beneficial to use precise language. Unclear or nebulous talk about "international understanding," "globalizing education," or "knowing more about other cultures or countries," is an alienating language to many educators. Such phrases should be defined.

II. International understanding cannot be developed in the secondary schools alone. International education must begin during the earliest grades where a foundation may be constructed that will support many more

years of social, cultural, and societal studies. Those talking about the secondary school curriculum must also talk about the elementary school experience.

III. Education for international understanding should not necessarily be restricted to the world history, geography, or world studies classroom. The courses in literature, foreign language, the arts, and even American studies can contribute significantly. An attempt to utilize the total school setting for intercultural studies may prove productive. After all, life is not separated into departments as are high schools or universities.

IV. The primary objective of international education may be learning that the societies of the world are parts of a system. Any program that stresses parts of the world to the exclusion of a conceptualization of a world system will meet resistance.

V. Developing school-year or even half-year courses designed to further international understanding may prove to be a strategic error. High school students very often have so many required courses that they are unable to enroll in elective courses. Any attempt to encourage a proliferation of course offerings, particularly required courses, at this time is a battle to be avoided. Using established and typically required courses such as "world studies," "geography," "world literature," and "American studies" is potentially the most productive strategy. It has been said that implementing curriculum improvement programs is a form of guerrilla warfare. The way to fight is to convince teachers that their present courses need a greater international flavor and then offer them imaginative materials that easily fit into their courses.

VI. It is imperative that teachers be given tangible, concrete, imaginative, student-motivating materials to use in the classroom. There is overwhelming evidence that curriculum guides, district course outlines, position statements, and inspirational publications from high level conferences fail to provide the support necessary to nurture and sustain an international education component of any course. Teachers need materials that students want to use.

VII. In designing an international education program, the attitudes and beliefs of students should be accepted as important variables. In one experimental nine-week course on Japan, the concepts associated with haiku and shibui, a short story by Masao Yamakawa concerned with urban alienation, and two articles about the generation gap and the role of the Japanese woman were judged "the most interesting material." A fine analysis of Japan's growing industrial strength was uniformly rejected. What the students enjoyed they studied; what they disliked they tended to ignore. The students in this trial course wanted to know more about what the Japanese valued and how they enjoyed themselves rather than how the world of business functioned. Contemporary Japanese problems associated with pollution, energy sources, acculturation, population, religion, urbanization, and crime were, however, enthusiastically pursued.

VIII. The content of a course or unit should include more than subject matter to be memorized. Besides information, students need to

discover concepts, insights, and relationships for themselves. They should have the opportunity to analyze, synthesize, and develop value judgments from the information they have encountered. They should have the experience of inquiring, of using information, and of creating generalizations.

IX. International education programs should integrate the perspectives processes, and concepts characterizing the various social sciences. International understanding must not be approached from an historical or humanities point of view exclusively. The trend in American high schools is toward the incorporation of social science concepts and inquiry strategies into social studies programs.

X. Those wishing to teach toward international understanding may find it appropriate to consider certain domestically located cultural differences and similarities together with certain international differences and similarities. The rejection of a mono-ethnic approach in favor of a multi-ethnic one in considering world societies may be equally reasonable in the study of American society. In fact, American students may be helped to accept cultural diversity at home by first examining cultural diversity in the world. The schoolroom analysis of the behavior of others in local, national, and international settings seems potentially useful.

XI. It may be possible for teachers who are not well-informed about international studies to teach a respectable course. They would have to be extremely well-motivated and be blessed with outstanding classroom materials. Of course, there would be a higher probability of success if experienced teachers who are highly motivated to improve international understanding were allowed to enroll in a serious set of international education courses. This can be done through school sponsored in-service courses, scholarship programs to universities, summer workshops, and well-planned overseas study trips to centers or institutions specifically designed to assist teachers.

XII. International understanding can be greatly assisted by private and public agencies. In 1972, the National Council for the Social Studies identified twenty-six of the most innovative and effective elementary and secondary social studies programs in the United States.[10] Although twenty-one of the twenty-six programs were funded for development by the federal government, only four of the programs were primarily concerned about students learning about other cultures. Only one of the twenty-six programs had international understanding as its major goal, and this one was financed by private funds. It seems that both private foundations and governmental agencies should assess their priorities in the field of social education.

The Role of Other Countries

Other countries can contribute to the American secondary schools' desire to increase international understanding. For example, public or private agencies in both the United States and Japan might agree that

two educational centers could be established, one in Japan and one in the United States. The center in Japan might be directed by Japanese administrators who would shape the policies according to the needs of the American educators, who would utilize the center's resources in their development of classroom materials. Similarly, educators from Japan might utilize the American center for a materials development effort to develop school materials considering certain aspects of the American society. Exchange programs for teachers selected to study at the two centers could take advantage of planned courses for practicing teachers. The centers could also act as communication links to international education efforts throughout the world.

A country such as Japan might develop an audio-visual resource center from which educationally designed booklets, recordings, motion pictures, film strips, slides, photographs, art reproductions, and simulated artifacts would be available without copyright restrictions for the cost of production. American educators and even commercial publishers would find such a service extremely helpful.

Educational centers might be established at institutions that train Japanese teachers. These centers could offer courses to American teachers, administrators, and teacher educators who seriously wish to learn more about Japan. American teachers would very likely be quite willing to finance their own tuition, lodging, etc., but they might need subsidized air travel or reduced air fares. It is important that such educational programs not become a tourist's summer trip through Japan but a serious study of how to translate the experience of another society to the American student.

Special internationally oriented educational units appropriate for use in a wide variety of American classes could be developed by Japanese educators. These materials could be commercially marketed through various American distributors, or they could be distributed inexpensively or without cost through the offices of Japanese corporations in the United States.

A Japanese educational center might be established in the United States that could act as a resource center for information about Japan. The various Japanese consulates throughout the United States are now receiving many requests for educational items. These requests could be processed through a central clearinghouse specifically designed to consider a wide variety of educational requests.

It is clear that countries such as Japan could be extremely helpful in assisting the American secondary schools to realize their objectives related to international understanding.

Notes

[1]Robin McKeown, "World Perceptions of Social Studies Teachers" (Berkeley: University of California, Asian Studies Curriculum Project, 1969).

[2]Harold Taylor, The World and the American Teacher (Washington, D.C.: American Assoc. of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1969).

[3]Seymour Fersh, "Studying Other Cultures Looking Outward is In," in James Becker and Howard Mehlinger (eds.), International Dimensions in the Social Studies (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1968), p. 122.

[4]James Becker and Maurice East, "Survey of International Studies in Secondary Schools," Global Dimensions in U.S. Education, the Secondary School (New York: Center for War/Peace Studies, 1972), pp. 15-25.

[5]A Survey of the Teaching of History and Social Studies (Princeton, N.J.: Test Development Division, Educational Testing Service, 1969).

[6]Wallace E. Lambert and O. Klineberg, Children's Views of Foreign People (New York: Appleton-Century, Crofts, 1967).

[7]Harold Taylor, The World and the American Teacher (Washington, D.C.: American Assoc. of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1969).

[8]Social Education, Nov., 1972, pp. 712-834.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid.